

I can clearly remember when I was in class at Catholic Theological Union studying the Gospel of Mark...and it came to this passage....

“Oh Sure!” many women students groaned...

“the poor woman is at death’s door...Jesus cures her...and what happens???  
she begins to serve *them!*”

Give me a break...don’t you think for once, they would serve her???”

Reasonable comment when you interpret ancient texts through contemporary eyes...

Today, if a woman was so desperately ill, of course,  
she would take time to recuperate, and get her strength back.

Today, perhaps, her son-in-law might even serve her....

But, in the ancient world when this story was retold and written down  
we must remember that a woman’s worth, ...whether we agree with it or not,  
whether we like it or not...was dependent upon how many children she could bear....  
especially how many male children she could produce.

Her area of influence was inside the home...

her sphere of power was in the kitchen and amidst the young children...

and if she ran her household well...she was honored.

For Simon’s mother-in-law to be cured and then get up and serve the men,  
was an act of purpose and honor for her.

She had regained her value...

She was, once again, worth something....

The point of our Gospel reading isn’t debating the value- or not-  
of serving or not serving the men in our families...

**The point is...or at least a point is: what gives our lives—my life-- purpose and meaning?  
What gives us a sense of personal honor and integrity?**

**Is the purpose of my life making money?  
Does having fame and power give my lives meaning?  
Does having the right house or the right clothes,  
the right toys, so to speak  
make me feel valued and loved?**

**Do I feel better about myself if I have the “in” thing...what ever that might be?**

**Unfortunately for some people that maybe be true...**

**But we all know at least on some level,  
that none of that will give of us any sense of happiness or self worth...  
none of that ‘stuff’ gives our lives purpose and meaning...**

**We all know, at least on some level...  
That true happiness comes from knowing that  
our being alive in the world has made a difference...to someone, something, somewhere, ...**

**Real happiness includes oneself, but can not be not limited to oneself.**

**Real happiness is not dependent upon our looking good or being thin or  
being rich...**

**Real happiness, true and lasting happiness comes from living a life of  
purpose and meaning..**

**and purpose and meaning comes from living your life for  
something or someone outside of yourself...**

**To be of service to the world,  
in a psychologically and spiritually healthy way though,  
must come from a place of self worth...  
from an inner ground of strength and self respect.**

**I know people, a lot of them are women, who manipulate people and/or situations  
by doing for others, and then laying on them a guilt trip...  
“oh...for all I have done for you....the least you could do is ...x, y, or z”**

**That type of service... doing for others in order to get the upper hand is not true service...**

**I have known people to do things for others only because  
they would feel guilty if they said no...or because they want people to like them or because  
they want some type of reward or recognition in return...  
None of that is horrible...and all of that may be partially true for all of us...  
but they are the most beneficial reasons for doing something for someone else...**

**Some people do things for others just to get God to love them and  
that is totally unnecessary because God already loves us!**

**When we are able to be of service to the world from a place of willingness and gratitude  
our service builds us up, even as it helps another out.**

**Service offered and done freely is Love.**

**For Love to be real and true  
it must be freely offered...without strings and conditions attached.**

**When we serve others freely...  
when we offer ourselves for the good -of -the -other**

**then our lives have true purpose and deep hearted meaning  
that is NOT is conditional upon the outcome of our offering.**

**We cannot control how others receive what we offer.  
We cannot control the ultimate success or failure of our efforts...  
and this, I believe, is where Grace and God come in...**

**There is a power, a mystery, a force, an energy, a Grace, a Holy Presence  
that holds the entire universe that we happen to call God....  
It is, he is, she is...beyond our intellectual, rational comprehension...  
but it is, he is, she is very well known in our hearts...**

**When we connect to the Presence,  
when we give our permission to the Holy One to act in and through our lives,  
our service has repercussions and effects that we could have never foreseen  
in our wildest imagination...**

**Sometimes we may not feel as if we have not succeeded at all,  
sometimes the results will seem so meager when compared to our effort,  
sometimes we don't ever get to know the ultimate effect of what we have done...  
but none of that ought to deter us from doing what we can do...right here, right now.**

**Offering our lives for the good of another...  
saying yes to the Presence and the Power of the Holy One  
to act in and through our lives  
and then letting go of the results  
is no small, servile effort.**

**It is, rather, a magnificent way to experience  
this exquisitely noble adventure of life....  
and for this we can truly say, Thank you! Amen**